



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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### **DEQ arrests men in Washington and Ouachita Parishes and obtains conviction in Ascension**

BATON ROUGE – Three men were arrested for environmental crimes in Ouachita and Washington parishes and one company pled guilty and was fined in Ascension parish.

Yesterday evening, Melvin Ray White, Jr., 48, of Angie, was arrested for dumping, and illegal burning of tires. Last week, Richard Frost, 68, West Monroe and Ronnie Cascio, 66, of Monroe, were arrested by DEQ's Criminal Investigations Division for illegal disposal of solid waste and by the Louisiana State Levee District Police, Tensas Basin Levee District, for damage to a levee, one count of excavating within 100 feet of a levee toe and one count of excavating within 30 feet of a levee toe.

In one investigation, DEQ investigators conducted surveillance in the area of Ola Magee Road in Angie and caught White in the act of burning tires on his property. He was placed under arrest for dumping and the illegal burning of tires in Washington Parish. DEQ's investigators were assisted by the Washington Parish Sheriff's office and Fire District Six who extinguished the fire. Photos and video are available.

In a separate investigation, Frost and Cascio were arrested as a result of a joint operation by the Louisiana State Levee District Police, Tensas Basin Levee District, inspectors from the DEQ's Northeast Regional Office and DEQ's Criminal Investigation Division for multiple felonies and misdemeanors, which resulted in damage to the Ouachita River and the Ouachita River Levee. Frost dumped debris from a recently destroyed building on the levee, excavated dirt from the landside of the levee and covered the debris. Cascio used unauthorized heavy machinery on the levee toe and the levee berm causing the levee to collapse approximately twelve feet in height and dumped construction material and then buried it.

In a separate case in Ascension Parish, Waguespack Rental Inc., dba Innovative Waste Systems, pled guilty to gross littering and was fined \$1,000. The company was also ordered to pay DEQ's cost of investigation, perform a community service project for Keep Ascension Beautiful and may face civil fines from DEQ.

"Innovative Waste Systems" is owned by Waguespack Rental Inc., located in Gonzales, whose President, Secretary/Treasurer and Director is Adrian Waguespack. DEQ ordered Waguespack Rental Inc., dba Innovative Waste Systems, to remove the solid waste, which it did. Photos are available.

The case was prosecuted by District Attorney Ricky Babin and DEQ's Criminal Enforcement Counsel Michael J Daniels, who was appointed as a special assistant district attorney for this matter.

"This arrest for waste tire burning strengthens the integrity of the program and levels the playing field for those properly operating within the system," said Vince Sagnibene, DEQ Undersecretary.

The mission of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is to protect the environment and public health. Any persons with knowledge of any spills, releases, odors, fish kills, open burning, waste tires and any other types of environmental incidents may contact the department at 225-219-3640 or Toll Free 1-888-763-5424.

*An arrest does not constitute guilt in a criminal case. All evidence compiled during the investigation is presented to the area prosecutors who determine if formal charges are warranted.*

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